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TALK TO NAVAL AVIATOR COMMUNITY

1245, Wednesday, 4 June 1980

(Sea Story)

Naval Aviation - #1 element of Navy

The area - most advanced over Soviets

- greatest payoff today

- w/o cannot respond to new long range weapons

systems; get up in air w/sensors;

strike out long distances w/weapons.

Naval aviation is vital to both protecting our forces and convoys at sea and to projecting power ashore by either amphibious assault or bombing. This is the case for both Navy's basic missions: SC and PP.

Because this is the case, you, the naval aviation community, bear great responsibility as to how you prepare naval aviation; to do this you need a strategic concept or objective--an understanding of what naval aviation must be prepared to do if the Navy is to fulfill its evolving role in national strategy.

Is it sea control? or is it power projection? or is it both?
or does the same aviation Navy do equally well at either?

In my view Sea Control is #1 role for naval aviation.

Why?

- Look at history--ultimate security of US has been threatened only twice in this century.
- WWI and WWII--when there was a danger of W. Europe into hostile hands. It might have happened if our SC against unrestricted SS warfare in Atlantic had not kept open vital supply lines to W. Europe.
- and had Europe fallen, our fundamental security would have been endangered.

Today you and I must always recognize that, aside from the strategic role of our SSBNs, keeping the Atlantic sea lanes open is the most important single reason for having a Navy. We tend not to discuss it much in peacetime. We even talk today of the unlikelihood of a third prolonged conventional war in Europe and hence of the unlikelihood of

having to wrest control of the Atlantic again. Yet in 1914 and 1939 it was also the conventional wisdom that war in Europe would be brief. If such war comes, and if it does turn out to be protracted, both sides will focus their entire naval effort on the N. Atlantic umbilical. Very unwise to base our force structure on what we think Soviets will do (i.e., short war). Intentions can be easily and quickly changed. Must base force structure on enemy's capabilities. The Soviets are capable of mounting a very long war of attrition-- look again at history: Neither Napoleon's attempt/Hitler's attempt to wear down the Soviets succeeded. All CNOs, all Secretaries of Defense know in their inner recesses that being able to meet that threat is the core reason for having a Navy; and when war comes they will not squander or risk their Navy elsewhere or for other purpose until this key issue is resolved.

Beyond this, we should never lose sight of the fact that even to do PP we must be able to control the sea environment in which either amphibious or carrier forces will operate.

Yet, since WWII--only fighting role USN has played has been PP in the 3rd world. We tend to be hypnotized by this and thus try to fit

PP into our strategy for Europe. It won't work. The contribution of PP by the USN to a major war in Europe can only be marginal.

- It is marginal first because it is so small in comparison to the total of land-based air power;
e.g., 4 CV's could provide less than 150 attack a/c.
Small increment compared with _____ US and Allied aircraft in NATO. Only in event of devastating tac nuc attack on all of NATO's land-based nuclear storage sites would the CV's role likely be critical.

- Because this is obvious, we talk about applying naval air power to the flanks where they might affect the balance more importantly. Talk about operating in the Eastern Mediterranean or the N. Norwegian Sea is nice. It would, however, require 3-4 CVs to establish sufficient sea control in such areas of high threat, and no President/SecDef is likely to place 1/2 to 2/3 of the Atlantic carrier fleet at high risk in order to conduct a mission that was not absolutely vital to the Alliance as a whole.

Remember, my belief is that CVs are essential to winning the battle for SC in the Atlantic. Too often we relegate that chore to P-3s,

Beef
up!
(only
support
for
your
view)

DD and SSNs. In my view they can't do it; not against long-range surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles fired from subs, surface combatants and aircraft. If I'm correct and our CV fleet has a primary mission of _____ SC, what kind of CVs do we want? The answer to that is "lots"; they all have to be in lots of places, and they all suffer attrition which is the very nature of sea control warfare--but let me come back to this some more in a moment, because we all recognize that you don't build your fleet just to meet your highest priority need.

- As shown since WWII, a lower priority may be much more likely to happen.

If we've used CV's only in PP in last 35 years--what about the next 10-20?

If we set aside strategic deterrence and the NATO conflict, I believe the greatest contribution of USN to national security will be in the Indian Ocean. Why?

Be
prepared
to
defend!

- Because--today and for the foreseeable future, our country has a vital national interest in that region. I believe it is axiomatic that wherever we have a vital national interest we must be able to bring military power to bear. You and I are clearly culpable today--we have inadequate military power that can be brought to bear in the Persian Gulf area without dangerously denuding both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. We did not do our homework over the past 20 years in laying out and forcefully expressing a strategic concept for our Navy.

If this area is important, what capabilities will we need there?

Two; I believe:

After ensuring that we have sufficient sea control to get there and, once there, to operate freely,

- 1) first, we must be able to put men ashore--
to control portions of the area;
- 2) second, we must have air power to defend the ground forces that are introduced and to conduct separate air strikes if necessary.

- Who can do these two jobs? The USN and USMC. I need not go into inhibitions on our sister services, Army and Air Force, in that part of the world. They can help, but will always be peripheral forces in an oceanic area like this.
- It's a long way from Straits Malacca up to India and back down along Eastern Africa to the Cape Good Hope. Also, it is ^(more?) 10,000 ? miles for a CV to get from US E. Coast to Persian Gulf.

Therefore, to meet this need, we're going to require lots of CVs and amphib. Without numbers, the odds of being close enough to a crisis area are too low. After all, ships are slow in terms of political decisionmaking, i.e., once a political decision made, even if whole force can sustain 20K, it takes 20+ days to steam 10,000 nm.

We have, I believe, defined the primary characteristics we need in CVs for both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean: lots of them.

How do we get a lot of carriers for both sea control in the Atlantic and power projection in the Indian Ocean--perhaps 18-24?

We build them small and w/fewer and less sophisticated aircraft.

But well you might ask, would such carriers be able to perform both of these missions?

I believe so. First, with SC in the Atlantic and with PP in remote areas, you can afford a lesser quantity of aircraft and weapons per carrier deck. In neither case will you face the VN practice of dumping large amounts of ordnance over long periods of time.

Second, PP in the future will not require as high performance a/c as in the past.

- We are surely approaching the day of real-time/remote controlled/unmanned/electronic and photo sensors. Such sensors will allow us to remotely guide unmanned weapons to almost any distance.
- Therefore, high performance aircraft to penetrate and to evade air defenses will be unnecessary. We'll simply stand off.

- Even for air defense interceptor work, a/c with high performance interceptor characteristics will not be necessary.
- The day of dog-fight died with the AWG-9. Maneuvering will be done by the weapon, not the air frame.

Therefore, what we need, initially at least, is:

- lots of Essex-size class CVs w/catapults; but generating toward 25,000T CVs w/VSTOL.
- We have a nice coincidence here. The proliferation of small CVs would help us handle the Indian Ocean in times short of general war, but would be ideal for a shift to SC in N. Atlantic if general war came.

For SC and for independent operations in a remote area like the Indian Ocean we not only need to change concept of CVs and a/c we need, but our operating habits.

- Increase flexibility of flight ops
- get away from cyclical ops--go to flex deck ops

- get away from 12 hrs. on/12 hrs. off flying--
become self-sufficient through 24-hr. ops
- get away from thinking of Alpha strikes--
think in terms of maintaining and augmenting a
given number of VF and VS stations and quick reaction
VA potential.

Hardly expected you'd agree with this philosophy. I may well be wrong--
perhaps do need large CVs and hi-performance a/c for some of the
traditional reasons, such as:

- hulls are cheap--why not build them large?
- need fuel and supplies in distant areas
- need sea-keeping
- need safety
- better defense.

These mainly tactical arguments very real--your lives at stake.

But 1st question is what is the strategic concept behind large force
of large CVs and hi-perf a/c? If my thesis is unpalatable--do you
have a different version? What would you have USA accomplish in 1980s
and 90s--and can you show that that requires more Eisenhowers/Nimitzes?

- ?
- You must decide what you want the Navy to do before you can decide what it should look like. From purpose flows the logic of requirements. An architect does not design a building and then later decide what it will be used for.

Once you've set your strategic goals and defined what kinds and amounts of air power you need--you can address the tactical issues like sea-keeping and self-defense. I would agree that there is a legitimate argument that it may take a large CV to handle all of the defensive weaponry needed in today's world of long-range weapons. But I would also argue that there is not just one answer to every problem.

I happen to come down on the side of the argument that says-- #'s are important for attrition, #'s are important for confusing enemy targeting, small size and hence radar and heat signatures are important for confusing targeting also, and miniaturized highly lethal defensive weapons will make the small CV a viable bet--but this is still a good argument to have. What it asks is what's the minimum size CV that is defensible under my strategic concept? or yours?

Will only get there if you in naval aviation will define missions and objectives carefully, that is, truly have a strategic concept.

Need:

- Open minds
- Don't let your logic be swayed by tradition or emotion.
- Imagination
- Don't be afraid of being the iconoclast. Nelson was; Sims was; Billy Mitchell was. A good idea will stand on its merits, however radical it may seem.
- Clear look at how role and use of naval aviation is evolving.

Remember, too, if you really have withdrawal pains--or sincere concerns that we not forsake what may be the saving grace for the land battle in Europe with large CVs:

- Won't run out of large CVs till after end of this century.
- Most of you will be retired by then--but your legacy will be the Navy this country will have to live with until nearly mid-21st century.

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